PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT IN ISLAM AND ITS EFFECTS ON NATIONS AND CIVILIZATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

Praise be to Allah; we praise Him, seek His forgiveness, and turn to Him in repentance. We seek refuge with Him from the evils of our souls and the evils of our deeds. Whomever Allah guides, none can misguide, and whomever Allah leads astray, none can guide. I bear witness that there is no god but Allah alone without partner, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger.

The individual is the basic element from which all principles and beliefs are brought forth, and upon which all nations and civilizations are built. If a nation is successful in developing its people as strong and complete individuals, then, with Allah's help, it will be able to realize a glorious future for itself. It will also be able to promote and defend its religion and its beliefs. If, on the other hand, a nation fails to develop its individual members, or if its people are deficient in carrying out some of the activities of life, then that nation is doomed to weakness, destruction, and obscurity.

In the chapters that follow, we shall attempt, with Allah's permission, to shed some light on this important topic.

Our discussion will be organized under the following headings:

Chapter One: The importance of the individual to the issue of nation building.

Chapter Two: Special qualities of an exemplary individual character.

Chapter Three: Men of distinction who developed under the Prophet's tutelage.

This final chapter is of special importance, because it provides for us examples of people who we should strive to emulate. By doing so, perhaps Allah will place us in their company in Paradise. Truly, this is Allah's affair and He is fully capable of carrying it out.

CHAPTER ONE

The Importance of the Individual to the Issue of National-Building

The First Islamic State:

The first Islamic state, which was established by Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him), was established on the shoulders of strong, powerful men: first on those of Allah's Messenger himself, then on the shoulders of his Companions. This holds especially true for the earliest Companions who took over the reigns of the state, like Abû Bakr, `Umar, `Uthmân, `Alî, Abû `Ubaydah, and Sa`d b. Abî Waqqâs (may Allah be pleased with them all).

When we look at a nation that enjoyed such a history – a nation that sings the praises of its own glorious past, a nation that had strength, fortitude, and divine assistance, a nation that produced many notable people – or when we look at a

nation that has achieved wealth, prosperity, and prestige or any kind of greatness whatsoever, we find that the secret of its strength and fortitude was its cultivation of upright individuals who were willing to make sacrifices for the sake of the values, beliefs, and principles that the nation upheld and for the sake of the nation itself.

The Concern of the Leadership for Individual Development:

The effects that the individual has on nation building and on the makings of civilization have been the concern of reformers and religious people since the dawn of Islam. `Umar b. al-Khattâb sat in the company of some Companions and said to them: "Wish for something."

Someone said: "I wish that this place were filled with gold so I could spend it for the sake of Allah.

`Umar repeated his demand: "Wish for something."

Someone else spoke up and said: "I wish it were filled with pearls, ornaments, and jewels so I could spend them for the sake of Allah and give them in charity."

No doubt, these wishes were very noble, but they were not what was on `Umar's mind. So he said again: "Wish for something."

They said to him: "We do not know what to wish for, O Commander of the Faithful."

`Umar then said: "I wish it were filled with men like Abû `Ubaydah b. al-Jarrâh, Mu`âdh b. Jabal, Sâlim the freed slave of Abû Hudhayfah, and Hudhayfah b. al-Yamân!"[1]

`Umar, therefore, was not concerned about wealth or money that might be spent for the sake of Allah, but he was concerned with something much more serious: character development. An upright individual who has true faith in what he believes will be capable of securing wealth and money – if just by virtue of his strength – and history has shown us that this is the case.

These are the people that nations rely upon – of course, after their total reliance on Allah – and if these people are blessed with patience and fortitude in following their principles and their beliefs, then their noble deeds will become almost like miracles. It is of utmost importance that they enjoy patience and steadfastness on their principles, because they are the ones who must take charge of the affairs of life, and if their affairs are in order, then the life of the people will be in order. On the other hand, if they fall into deviance and wickedness, fall victim to worldly desires, or become corrupted by their surroundings, then the world will become as corrupt as they are.

Ibn al-Mubârak, in his work entitled Kitâb al-Zuhd, relates that `Îsâ (Jesus, peace be upon him) said to his disciples: "Do not take any payment from those who you teach except the likes of what you gave to me."[2]

[1] ***Ahmad, Fadâ'il al-Sahâbah (1280). Its chain of transmission contains Humayd b. Ziyâd al-Kharrât Abû Sakhr. Al-Dhahabî spoke about him, saying: "People have disagreed about him." Ibn Hajar said: "He is honest (sudûq)."***

[2] ***Ibn al-Mubârak, Kitâb al-Zuhd (283) and Abû Nu`aym in al-Hilyah (5/7).***

We must make note of the fact that `Îsâ (peace be upon him) did not take any payment from his disciples. Allah says in the Qur'ân, conveying to us the words of the Prophets (peace be upon them all): "I ask no payment from you. My reward is but from the Lord of All the Worlds."[3] – meaning that when you teach people about Islam, you should not take any payment from them.

Then `Îsâ (peace be upon him) said to them: "O salt of the Earth, do not become rotten." These disciples, who were `Îsâ's most esteemed followers, his confidants, and his closest companions, who carried his Message and spread the faith to all corners of the Earth, were the only small group of people who were calling people away from corruption. So he says to them: "O salt of the Earth, do not become rotten, because if salt becomes rotten, there is no remedy for it."[4] Some of the pious predecessors had set these words in verse, saying:

O gathered reciters, O salt of the Earth!
Salt does not cure if the salt has gone bad.

These men – these solitary individuals, upon whose shoulders nations, civilizations, and the call to faith were established – could not have fulfilled their vital role if they did not enjoy strong, well developed, and healthy personal characters. They also had to have patience and steadfastness on their principles. They could not be swayed from their noble purpose by corruptive influences, desires, or personal ambitions.

CHAPTER TWO

Special Qualities of an Exemplary Individual Character

These individuals, who are so desperately needed for the call to Islam, need to possess a certain natural disposition and certain exceptional qualities that suit the role in life that they were created to play. There are also other qualities that they must acquire on their own, nurture, and then apply when they call people to Islam.

We might wonder why Allah chose to have the call to Islam originate in the Arabian Peninsula. Why not start with Persia or Rome, and why not begin with the Jews and the Christians? When we look into the question, we find that Arabia was chosen for the unique qualities of its inhabitants. Allah says: "Allah knows best where to place His Message." [Sûrah al-An`âm: 124] The Arabs, in spite of all their deviance, lived in a vast desert that shielded them from exposure to many corruptive influences from outside. Their nomadic, desert lifestyle kept them from being affected by the deviant philosophies that dominated the intellectual life of most people at that time. They enjoyed the virtues of bravery, generosity, strength, and honesty.

When the Prophet (peace be upon him) called them declare that there is no god but Allah, some of them could easily have done so, not out of conviction, but in order to please the Prophet (peace be upon him) and remain on good terms with him. But because they were people of the desert, their natural disposition was to be straightforward, honest, and frank. They did not play games. They rejected the call to monotheism and said in total frankness: "Has he made all the gods into one God? Truly, this is a strange thing." [Sûrah Sâd: 5]

[3] ***Sûrah al-Shu`arâ': 109, 127, 145, 164, 180.***
[4] ***Ibn al-Mubârak, Kitâb al-Zuhd (283) and Abû Nu`aym in al-Hilyah (5/7).***

The Arabs enjoyed a very good set of character traits compared to what could be found among other nations of that time.

These traits are necessary for anyone who works for Islam or calls others to it. At the same time, there are three things that must be accomplished in order for those who possess these traits to develop into people who can work for the benefit of Islam:

1. A person's good qualities must be channeled into Islamic work.

Islam does not seek to do away with the natural disposition of the people who embrace it. Instead, it works to channel their natural qualities into a productive and healthy direction. Take `Umar b. al-Khattâb for example. He was a very strong and powerful man in the time of ignorance. Many of the Quraysh feared him. From the day that he accepted Islam, all of this strength and power turned into courage and valor for the sake of Allah and daring in confronting the unbelievers and polytheists. This is what is mentioned about `Umar in all the biographies of the Prophet's life.

`Umar's son, Ibn `Umar, related the following about his father's conversion to Islam:

"When my father accepted Islam, he asked: 'Who among Quraysh is best at spreading the words of others?' He was informed that this person was Jamîl b. Ma`mar al-Jamhî. So he went to him and I followed, hoping to see what he was going to do. I was a child at the time, but could understand everything that as going on around me. When we approached him, `Umar said: 'Jamîl, do you know that I have accepted Islam, the religion of Muhammad?' By Allah, Jamîl did not say a word but stood up and drew his cloak about him. `Umar followed him and I followed my father. When we came to the door of the Mosque, Jamîl declared at the top of his voice to the Quraysh who were assembled around the Ka`bah: '`Umar b. al-Khattâb has become a Sabian.' `Umar called out from behind him: 'He lies. I have accepted Islam and have declared that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger.' They turned against him in rage, and fighting broke out between them and `Umar until the sun was directly over their heads and `Umar abated and sat down, leaving them standing above him. He said: "Do as you see fit, because I swear by Allah that if we had been three hundred men, we would have had to leave Mecca to you or you would have had to leave it to us'."[5]

This gives us a clear picture of the sheer strength that `Umar possessed before embracing Islam. After he accepted Islam, this strength was employed properly and directed to bringing about a great deal of good for Islam.

[5] Ibn Ishâq, al-Sîrah al-Nabawiyyah (2/192-193). `Abd al-Razzâq relates it from him in his Musannaf (5/327) as does Ahmad (Fadâ'il al-Sahâbah: 372), Hâkim in al-Mustadrak (4493), Ibn Hibbân (6879, and al-Diyâ' in al-Mukhtârah. They all relate it from Ibn Ishâq from Nâfi` from Ibn `Umar. Ibn Hajar informs us in al-Taqrîb that Ibn Ishâq is honest but sometimes fails to mention some of the narrators in the chain of narration (sudûq mudallis). In this narration, Ibn Ishâq gives clear indications that each person in the chain of narrators actually heard the narration from the narrator that came before him, so we are certain in this instance that Ibn Ishâq did not fail to mention any of the narrators. This hadîth can be rated as good (hasan) at the very least.

Islam did not come to obliterate the personalities of men and turn people into clones of one another, or to make them as if they were all cast from the same mold. Islam came to develop the unique and special characteristics of each individual Muslim so that they can be employed in the service of Islam. Islam does not seek to turn everyone into a scholar or to make everyone into soldier who brandishes his sword in Allah's cause. Nor does it seek to turn everyone into devotees who pray all night and fast all day. Quite the contrary, Islam addresses people with what suits their individual temperaments. Someone who is strong in the time of ignorance remains strong after accepting Islam. A person who is naturally very devout and strongly emotional will find fulfillment in Islam and become engaged in worship and devotion, but this does not mean entering into some Sufi order. A man who is brave and strong will find in Islam the duties of jihâd. A person with an active mind will find that Islam encourages people to think and to seek knowledge.

Perhaps the Prophet (peace be upon him) was alluding to this fact when he said: "Everyone will find easy what he is created for."[6] Every Muslim much engage in a minimum amount of worship, seeking knowledge, and jihâd, but in this hadîth, the Prophet (peace be upon him) was speaking about individual distinction. These distinctive features are to be developed, not suppressed. They should be directed to the service of Islam.

At the same time, these qualities must be refined and corrected and their excessive tendencies put in check. We find that `Umar, who was strong, stern, and severe in the time of ignorance, had these same qualities refined by his belief in Allah, the Hereafter, Paradise, and Hell, so much so that he would often criticize and rebuke himself. Anas b. Mâlik relates that he went with `Umar to one of the walled gardens. `Umar entered it and Anas, from behind the wall, heard him addressing himself, saying: "`Umar b. al-Khattâb, Commander of the Faithful, bravo, bravo! I swear by Allah, you will either fear Allah or He will truly punish you!"[7]

`Umar was addressing himself. It was as if he were saying to himself: "How have you arrived at where you are – you who used to tend your father's sheep in the time of ignorance without a care in the world – you are now the Commander of the Faithful. People take note of you." Then, he shows his astonishment about what happened, saying: "Bravo, bravo." Then, immediately, he rebukes himself, saying: "I swear by Allah, you will either fear Allah or He will truly punish you!" It was as if he were saying to himself: "It will be of no benefit you before Allah that you are the ruler or that you hold a position of status and prestige among the Muslims unless you work righteous deeds."

In this way, Islam benefited from the special quality of `Umar's strength, after it was tempered and properly directed, so that it would never transgress the proper limits.

There is another good example to be found in Khâlid b. al-Walîd, a man endowed with extraordinary courage. The rash boldness that he exhibited in the times of ignorance was transformed into bravery, daring, and leadership in the path of Allah, victory for Islam, and defeat for the enemies of the faith. It is authentically related that Khâlid b. al-Walîd used to say: "Neither the night where my new bride who I love was first presented to me, nor the night when I was given the glad tidings of a

[6] ***Bukhârî (7112) and Muslim (2649).***
[7] ***Muwatta' (1800) and Ibn `Abî `Âsim, Kitâb al-Zuhd (1/115). Its chain of transmission is sound (sahîh).***

son were more beloved to me than that fierce, bitter cold night where I was dispatched with a party of men to fight the enemy in the morning."[8]

Khâlid's natural courage and leadership were transformed into a sincere and constant desire to engage in jihad. This fearless fighter found pleasure and contentment by going forward in the path of Allah. Though he, like everyone else, could feel fear and the pain of severe cold, he considered that night to be the most pleasurable night of his life.

The unique characteristics of each individual must be capitalized upon and benefited from, developed, and steered in the right direction.

2. Emphasis must be placed on the positive aspects of a person's character.

We all know that every person, no matter how bad, has some good qualities. That goodness might be completely obscured by deviance or iniquity until a person might seem to be vileness in human form. Yet, if that person is fortunate enough to taken by an able and sympathetic hand that can remove the deviance that has soiled his natural disposition, then the good qualities of that person's character will emerge, qualities that are both special and praiseworthy. The best example of this is the story of `Umar b. `al-Khattâb that `Âmir b. Rabî`ah relates from his mother Laylâ:

"`Umar was one of the severest people against Islam. While we were preparing to leave for Abyssinia and I was on my camel ready to depart, `Umar came to me and asked: 'Where are you going, O Mother of `Abd Allah?' I said: 'You all have abused us on account of our religion, so we will go in Allah's Earth to a place where we will not be abused for worshipping Allah.' `Umar said: 'May Allah be with you' and then departed. Then my husband, `Âmir b. Rabî`ah came and I told him about what I saw of `Umar's gentleness. He asked me if I had hopes that `Umar would accept Islam. I said 'yes', to which he replied: 'By Allah, al-Khattâb's donkey will accept Islam before he does!' "[9]

Here is another good example. Anas b. Mâlik relates that Hafsah, the wife of the Prophet (peace be upon him) called her co-wife Safiyyah the daughter of a Jew. Now, this was true, because Safiyyah's father, Hubayy b. Akhtab, was in fact a Jew who had died without ever accepting Islam. Still, such a comment could be understood as a weakness in Safiyyah's person, which would be even more hurtful as it was coming from her co-wife. So when she heard what Hafsah had said, she started to cry. The Prophet (peace be upon him) then came in and asked her why

[8] ***Ahmad, Fadâ'il al-Sahâbah (1476), here quoted verbatim. Also: Abû Ya`lâ, al-Musnad (7185). Al-Haythamî presents it in his work Majma` al-Zawâ'id (9/350) and comments: "Its narrators are those of the authentic compilations." In the chain of transmission given by Abû Ya`lâ, there is Yahyâ b. Yamân. Ibn Hajar in al-Taqrîb says the following about him: "Honest and pious, makes many mistakes and has changed in his ability over time." Ibn `Adî comments: "Most of what he relates is not carefully memorized, and though he does not intentionally lie, he makes many mistakes and gets things mixed up." Tahdhîb al-Tahdhîb, 11/307) The story has other chains of transmission to be found in the Musannaf of Ibn Abî Shaybah (4/214), Ibn al-Mubârak in al-Jihâd (107), but they are not free of problems. All of the narrations taken together, however, indicate that this story has an authentic basis.***

[9] ***Abû Dâwûd (2647), given verbatim. Also: Ahmad in al-Musnad (5384, 5591), Tirmidhî (1716). Al-Tirmidhî says: "This hadîth is only known by way of Yazîd b. Abî Ziyâd." Ahmad says the following about him: "His hadîth are not much." Abû Zur`ah says: "He is weak. His hadîth should be recorded but not used as evidence."***

she was crying. She said: “Hafsah called me the daughter of a Jew.” To this the Prophet peace be upon him) replied: “Verily, you are the daughter of a Prophet, your uncle was also a Prophet, and you are the wife of a Prophet, so what does she have over you to boast about?” He then turned to Hafsah and said: “Fear Allah, O Hafsah.”[10] In an alternate narration, the Prophet is reported to have said to Safiyyah: “Why didn’t you say: ‘So how can you be better than me? Muhammad (peace be upon him) is my husband. Hârûn (Aaron, peace be upon him) is my father, and Mûsâ (Moses, peace be upon him) is my uncle.”

Safiyyah was a descendant of Hârûn (peace be upon him). So, when Hafsah insinuated that Safiyyah’s being the daughter of a Jew was something bad, the Prophet (peace be upon him) showed Hafsah another way of looking at it: that Safiyyah was the descendant of Prophet Hârûn and that her uncle was Mûsâ (peace be upon them both), and that her husband was Muhammad (peace be upon him), so there was no reason for her to be ashamed that her father was a Jew.

This, then, is the second approach to Islamic character development. It entails drawing forth the latent good that exists within a person and concentrating on his or her positive qualities.

3. Effort must be made to draw forth every good that a person is capable of.

This is achieved by providing many avenues for doing acts of good. There is prayer, charity, fasting, Hajj, jihâd, seeking knowledge, doing good to others…and the list goes on. Every strength and ability that a person can muster has a productive outlet where that person can truly feel that he or she is serving Islam.

There is no doubt that a lot of people – especially our young people – are endowed with many physical and mental strengths. When there is no one to cultivate these strengths and abilities, they either wither away or become employed in ignoble pursuits. They are used in pursuit of vain desires or squandered in wasting time in the company of vulgar “friends”.

On the other hand, a proper Islamic upbringing provides ways of channeling these abilities and strengths into fruitful paths. Here are a few examples of how this can be achieved:

Allah’s Messenger (peace be upon him) said: “Whoever spends two things in the path of Allah will be called to from the gates of Paradise with: ‘O servant of Allah, this is good’. A person who used to pray, will be called from the gate of prayer. A person who used to engage in jihâd will be called from the gate of jihâd. A person who used to fast will be called from the gate of fasting. A person who used to give in charity will be called from the gate of charity.”

When Abû Bakr heard this hadîth from the Prophet (peace be upon him), he said: “O Messenger of Allah, “A person who is called from any one of these doors is in need of nothing more, but is there anyone who will be called from all of them?”

The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: “Yes, and I hope that you are one of them.”[11]

[10] ***Al-Tirmidhî (3894), quoted here verbatim. Also: Ahmad (11984), and Ibn Hibbân (7211).***
[11] ***Bukhârî (1764) and Muslim (1027). It is related by Abû Hurayrah.***

There are many ways of doing good. A person may feel that he or she can share in some specific activity or that he or she has the ability to do a number of different things. This is why Abû Bakr will be among those who will be called from all the gates of Paradise. The group of angels assembled at each door will call out to him and say: "O Abû Bakr, this is good. (meaning that this gate is good, so come and enter through it)." This shows the extra distinction and virtue of Abû Bakr. This should not be surprising, for Abû Hurayrah relates that one day the Prophet (peace be upon him) asked his Companions: "Who started the day fasting?" And Abû Bakr said that he had. Then the Prophet (peace be upon him) asked: "And who today followed a funeral procession?" Abû Bakr replied that he had. Then the Prophet (peace be upon him) asked: "And who today gave food to a poor person?" Abû Bakr responded that he had. Then the Prophet (peace be upon him) asked: "And who today visited a sick person?" Again, Abû Bakr responded that he had. At this point, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "These qualities will not all come together in a person without that person entering Paradise."[12] The Prophet (peace be upon him) had asked his Companions four questions, each about a different way of doing good. Abû Bakr had done all of these in that one day, and the Prophet (peace be upon him) gave him the glad tidings of Paradise.

CHAPTER THREE

Men of Distinction Who Developed under the Prophet's Tutelage

The three previously discussed approaches were among the most important methods used by the Prophet (peace be upon him) in forming and developing the personalities of his Companions. This is why we find that the "graduates" of this prophetic "school" were the greatest, most skillful, and strongest graduates in history. They were brought up and nurtured under his direct guidance. The strength of any school is measured by the effects that it has, so we shall now take a look at a few individuals to see how strong this prophetic tutelage actually was.

1. Mus`ab b. `Umayr

Khabbâb b. al-Art had said: "Then we emigrated along with the Prophet (peace be upon him) seeking the countenance of Allah and our reward became incumbent upon Allah. Some of us went through our lives without consuming any part of this reward. Among these people was Mus`ab b. `Umayr. He was killed on the day of the Battle of Uhud, and we could not find anything to shroud him with except for a piece of cloth that if we used it to cover his head, his feet would show, and if we covered his feet with it, his head would show. The Prophet (peace be upon him) ordered us to cover his head with it and cover his feet with grass. And now among us are those whose wealth has grown and they spend it as they please."[13]

This Companion, who made great sacrifices for the sake of Allah, had lived a comfortable and luxurious life in Mecca. He used to wear the best of clothes and eat the best of food. Whenever he walked along the road, the pleasant smell of his perfume could be detected from far away. After he accepted Islam, all of this comfort turned into severe hardship. He first emigrated from Mecca to Abyssinia, where he faced fatigue and the difficulties of being a foreigner. He then returned and

[12] ***Muslim (1028). It is related by Abû Hurayrah.***
[13] ***Bukhârî (3701).***

emigrated to Madinah before the rest of the emigrants and before the Prophet (peace be upon him) emigrated. He went there to teach the Companions about Islam as well as to call the people of Madinah to it. He used to be called al-Muqri' (the Reciter). Then, not long after the Prophet (peace be upon him) arrived, Mus`ab died, without getting the chance to enjoy much time in Madinah in his company after Allah had strengthened Islam. He never got to see his prosperity grow, like Khabbâb mentioned that others had. Part of his story is that he carried the banner during the Battle of Uhud and was killed while defending it, and when they wished to bury him, they could not find anything that could shroud his entire body, so they shrouded part of his body and covered the rest in grass. This is one poignant example of an individual who graduated from the school of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

2. The Learned Scholar: `Abd Allah b. `Abbâs

He was a child during the Prophet's lifetime (peace be upon him) or on the verge of maturity. Ibn `Abbâs relates the following about himself: "After the Prophet (peace be upon him) died, I said to a man from among the people of Madinah: 'Let's go and ask the Companions about the hadîth of the Prophet (peace be upon him), because the hadîth are so many.' He said to me: "This is strange of you, Ibn `Abbâs. Do you think that the people need you when there are so many of the Prophet's Companions around?' So that man did nothing and I went forward, pursuing the Companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and asking them about his hadîth. Whenever I learned that a man had heard a hadîth directly from the Prophet (peace be upon him) and I found him taking an afternoon nap, I would place my cloak against his door to shield my face from the wind until he came out. He would say: 'What has brought you here, cousin of Allah's Messenger?' I would reply: 'A hadîth that I have learned you heard directly from the Prophet and that I wished to hear directly from you.' He would say: 'Why didn't you send for me to come to you?' I would say: 'It was more right for me to come to you.' That man (from the beginning of the story) passed me by one day while the people were coming to me with their inquiries and said: 'You were smarter than me'."[14]

In this way, Ibn `Abbâs acquired a great quantity of knowledge, so much so that the people were in great need of him. They would converge on him asking their questions, though he had been very young during the lifetime of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

This man took this path of pursuing knowledge because of the encouragement he received from the Prophet (peace be upon him) to acquire knowledge. The Prophet (peace be upon him) made a special supplication for him to receive understanding of the religion, saying: "O Allah, give him understanding of the faith and teach him how to interpret (the Qur'ân)."[15]

This man – a young man in the prime of his life – was equal to the greatest scholars. `Umar would bring him to his meetings with the most prominent of the Emigrants. Ibn `Abbâs relates this to us, saying: "`Umar used to consult with me along with the Companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him). `Abd al-Rahmân b. `Awf said to

[14] ***Ahmad, Fadâ'il al-Sahâbah (1925) and Dârimî (570) with an authentic (sahîh) chain of narration.***
[15] ***Ahmad (2397), al-Hâkim, al-Mustadrak (6280). Al-Hâkim says: "It has an authentic (sahîh) chain of transmission but they (al-Bukhârî and Muslim) did not relate it." It is as al-Hâkim said, even though the chain of narrators contains `Abd Allah b. Khuthaym who had received some minor and inconsequential criticism.***

him: "Do you consult with him when we have children his age?' `Umar replied: 'It is on account of his learning.'

"`Umar then asked about this chapter of the Qur'ân: 'When the help of Allah comes and the victory, and you see people entering into Allah's religion in crowds, then celebrate the praises of your Lord and seek His forgiveness, for verily He is Oft-Forgiving.' [Sûrah al-Fath]

"I replied: 'It refers to the end of the life of Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) that Allah was making him aware of.' `Umar said: 'I swear by Allah, I know of this exactly what you know."[16]

Ibn `Abbâs relates another event: "`Umar b. al-Khattâb used to summon me along with the Companions of Muhammad (peace be upon him) and would tell me not to speak until they have spoken. He summoned them and asked them about the Night of Decree (Laylah al-Qadr). He related to them that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had said: 'Look for it in the last ten nights of Ramadân.' Then he asked: 'Which night do you think it is?' Some suggested it was the first of the ten nights, others said it was the third, and some said it was the fifth. All this time I remained silent. `Umar then said to me: 'Why don't you speak?' I said: 'If you permit me, O Commander of the Faithful, I will speak.' He said: 'I did not summon you except to hear you speak.' I said: 'I can give you my opinion.' He said: 'That is what we are asking from you.' Then I said: 'It is the seventh of the ten nights. Allah mentions seven heavens and seven Earths. He created the human being from seven and He created the plants of the Earth from seven.' `Umar said: 'You have informed me of what I know, but there is something of this that I do not know. What do you mean by your statement that the plants of the Earth are from seven?'

"I then told him that Allah says: 'And We split open the Earth, and produced therein corn and grapes and herbs and olives and dates and dense gardens and fruits and fodder.'

"`Umar then said: 'You were all unable to say anything like what this youth whose mind is not yet fully matured has said. By Allah, I do not see this matter to be except as he sees it.' He then said to me: 'I used to order you not to speak until they have spoken, but now I order you to speak along with them'."[17]

3. An example of altruism

The following example – the story of three people who were killed in the battle of Yarmûk – will allow us to conceptualize the extent to which the graduates of Muhammad's school (peace be upon him) had developed. Abû Jahm b. Hudhayfah al-`Adawî relates: "On the day of the Battle of Yarmûk, I went out in search of my cousin. I carried with me a water skin and a small container thinking that if he were still alive, I would give him some water to drink and wipe his face with it. I found him on the verge of death and offered to give him water to drink. He motioned that he wanted it. Then we heard another man moan in pain. My cousin then motioned to me to give the water to him. It turned out that the other man was Hishâm b. al-`Âs,

[16] Tirmidhî (3362). Al-Tirmidhî declared it to be good and authentic (hasan sahîh).
[17] Al-Hâkim, al-Mustadrak (1597) quoted verbatim. Also: Ibn Khuzaymah (2172) and al-Bayhaqî in al-Sunan al-Kubrâ. Ibn Khuzaymah says: "This hadîth is authentic (sahîh) according to the conditions of Muslim, but al-Bukhârî and Muslim did not relate it."

the brother of `Amr b. al-`Âs. I went to him and offered to give him the water, and then another man moan in pain. Hishâm motioned to me to take it to him, so I went, only to find that he had already died. Then I returned to Hishâm, but he had also died. Then I went back to my cousin, but he had died as well."[18]

This is an impressive story of altruism, since it did not occur at a time of ease. Many people are generous and altruistic when times are easy, but what happened here was at a time of severe hardship – the greatest hardship of all: the need to quench the searing heat that affects the throat at the time of death.

These people were generous at this trying time, but it is not surprising to see the followers of Muhammad (peace be upon him) – the Companions and the Successors – attain this level of development.

What I have mentioned here is but an example. It is very easy for anyone to get hold of some books that collect the events of the lives of other people like them. Anyone who does so cannot help but be amazed.

The following books are some of the many important compilations of the lives of the Companions, Successors, and those who came after them and followed their example:

Siyar A`lâm al-Nubalâ' by al-Dhahabî.
Hilyah al-Awliyâ' by Abû Nu`aym.
Al-Isâbah fî Tamyîz al-Sahâbah by Ibn Hajar al-`Asqalânî
Al-Istî`âb.
Usud al-Ghâbah.

To conclude, I ask Allah to place us in their company in Paradise. And may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon our Prophet Muhammad and upon all of his family and Companions.

[18] ***Ibn al-Mubârak, Kitâb al-Zuhd (525). He also mentions it in al-Jihâd (116). Al-Bayhaqî mentions it in Shu`ab al-Îmân (3483).***